

Let me tell you about myself:



I am Jothi, a resident of Kadharvedu village and a college student doing second year under graduation. I used to be a reticent person, shy in nature and had fears of even small things too. With lot of hesitation only last year I joined the ISD as a worker in-charge of the Sustainable Learning Centre in Kadharvedu. I was not confident, though I was identified as the most eligible person by ISD after a discussion with me and few others. I was scared that what the people of my neighbourhood and village would say about me if I take up this responsibility. Now, after a year of working, I realise that I made a very wise decision. Today, I am recognized as one important person in the village, 22 children they relate with me as a person whom they can always depend for any help, parents see me as a resourceful person and rely on me to keep a vigil on their ward's behavior, and I am able to live up to the expectations of ISD by performing my duties to perfection.

ISD SLC in my village started with me as the Centre-in-charge and 22 listed students. I was trained at ISD in how to run the Centre and what are the issues I should discuss with the children and the parents etc. Besides daily class for the children, I have to conduct parents meeting once a month and visit the houses of the children on a turn. I have to participate in the monthly review meeting held at ISD also.



Over the year there have been many changes:

Initially, among the 22 children studying in my Centre only five were using footwear and cutting nails was only once a while by most of them. After explaining the advantages of wearing footwear, all of them started using that regularly whenever they come out of their house. Earlier they never used to wash hands properly before taking a meal; but now they wash their hands with soap before taking meals as well as after using toilet. Not only that they use soap for hand wash, they insist their parents and siblings too at home to do the same and the parents were surprised to see how their children explained to them why they should wash the hands with soap. Practice of cutting of nails once in a fortnight has become part of their life now.



Holding parents meetings was a challenge for me in the beginning, not many parents respond and only four or five come. I used to be disappointed after that. When I reported to ISD about this, they told me to keep on conducting the meeting regularly, but now the attendance at such meetings is almost 75% and others who couldn't come for the meeting visit the Centre at some other time or meet me at home and enquire about the developments. The parents tell me that the children have reduced their TV time and started studying in a disciplined manner and if

the clock strikes 5.20 PM, children are leaving the house to attend the SLC activities with cheer and enthusiasm. I have also discussed with them about some financial contribution they can make towards the Centre. It was jointly decided in a parents meeting that they will pay Rs 10/- per month. ISD has agreed that they will take the collection once in a year and put the balance required and take the children for an outing during summer with that amount.



I do go to the houses of the children. Normally on the birthday of the child I visit the house along with other children of the Centre and greet him/her. Planting a tree has become the way of birthday celebration for the children at our Centre. When we present them a tree and make the child plant that, usually the parents feel very happy and proud. They also offer us sweets made at home. The growth of the plants is monitored through the children. House visits on other cases like for child who report long sickness etc are made as per the requirement. In one such visit last month, I observed that the surrounding of the house was very bad with lot of water logging, mosquitoes etc at the house of Chandru. So I explained to the parents about the need to maintain the surroundings neat. And the boy told me that they have cleaned up that dirt but I may verify that sometime next week with a revisit.

Listening to the radio specifically the programme *Arogya Baharatham* (a programme on health issues) at 5.30 PM on All India Radio Chennai A channel is one of our regular activity. ISD has provided a radio for that. Many changes happened with me personally after listening to this Radio programme. Parents also enquired about the Radio programme and its purpose. When I explained to them, they were surprised about such useful programme broadcasted in radio. Besides that I used to give three to five general knowledge/current affairs questions for the children every day to answer.



ISD has given many indoor and outdoor games items at the Centre and initially I had to learn them first before I give to the children. Weekly one day is meant for games, normally on Saturdays.

During the initial period, I used to find it very difficult to manage the two hours SLC time every day. Students won't listen to me and I used to get frustrated. I discussed with teachers from other SLCs like Jhancy Rani from Sembedu SLC, and they have guided me. Besides, there is review meeting every month at ISD. We, teachers from all the SLCs share our experience and any new things we did, like water walk with the children, making the children do the tippy-tap and use for hand wash, any special child health issues, etc. In the initial stages I never used to like the review meetings. Now, I understand my role, realized the importance of SLC and its activities, and always come forward to discuss relevant issues without an iota of fear. I must thank the ISD team members for their constant support and encouragement; I have gained lot of confidence and discuss everything fearlessly. I have a feeling that if the teachers from all the six SLCs can come at a common time for the review, instead of the four normally come now; there will be more to share and learn.



Now the children are a changed lot and want to spend more time at the Centre. But the Centre closes at 8 PM. This responsibility has given me more strength, I am always happy and forgetting all my worries.

(Translated from a six pages write up in Tamil wrote by her on her own to share with other ISD Members)